BC STATS
Province of British Columbia
Ministry of Finance and Corporate Relations

Infoline

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February 7, 1997

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http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca

Report **Recent Immigrants' English Language Ability**

BC at a glance . . .

POPULATION (thousands)	Oct 1/96	% change on year ago
BC	3,888.5	2.5
Canada	30,101.6	1.2
GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT		% change
(BC - at market prices - $ millions)	1995	on year ago
Current Dollars	103,273	4.6
Constant (1986) Dollars	74,107	1.9
TRADE ($ millions)		
Manufacturing Shipments (seas. adj.) Nov	2,795	-0.7
Merchandise Exports (raw) Nov	1,976	-3.6
Retail Sales (seasonally adjusted) Nov	2,678	4.6
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX		% change
(all items - 1986=100)	Dec '96	on year ago
BC	138.7	0.7
Canada	136.8	2.2
LABOUR FORCE (thousands)		% change
(seasonally adjusted)	Dec '96	on year ago
Labour Force - BC	2,017	3.7
Employed - BC	1,840	4.2
Unemployed - BC	177	-1.1
		Dec '95
Unemployment Rate - BC *(percent)*	8.8	9.2
Unemployment Rate - Canada *(percent)*	9.7	9.4
INTEREST RATES (percent)	Feb 5/97	Feb 7/96
Prime Business Rate	4.75	7.00
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	5.20	6.75
- 5 year	7.25	7.80
US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE	Feb 5/97	Feb 7/96
(avg. noon spot rate) Cdn $	1.3449	1.3731
US $ *(reciprocal of above rate)*	0.7435	0.7283
AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS		% change
(industrial aggregate - dollars)	Nov '96	on year ago
BC	617.74	3.2
Canada	595.39	3.3

SOURCES:
Gross Domestic Product: Statistics Canada, revised by BC STATS
Population, Trade, Prices, Labour Force, Earnings: Statistics Canada
Interest Rates, Exchange Rates: Bank of Canada Weekly Review

New Publication

Just released is *A Guide to the BC Economy and Labour Market*, authored by Lillian Hallin of BC STATS. This 80-page book provides basic information on the industrial building blocks of BC's economy and the characteristics of employment in these, including projected job growth. It details provincial industries with an emphasis on their human resource side. Economic terms are explained and examples provided, so that a background in economics is not necessary. The book also provides a perspective on where the province has come from historically. This is to help provide a context for where BC's industries are at in the mid-1990s and where they are expected to be going into the next century. We will gladly mail copies for a shipping and handling charge of $5 per copy (plus GST). Sorry, no invoices at this price. But we do take VISA and Mastercard.

New on our website . . .

Choose the ***Other Statistics*** touchbar from the home page. Of special interest are 1994 tax profiles—one-page for each community and regional district. In the ***handouts, sub-provincial*** area you will find a single comprehensive tabular presentation of the same data.

Many of the *off the shelf* ***handouts*** that BC STATS has prepared for a number of years to assist in answering common lines of enquiry fill out the remainder of this area of our site. As a measure to cope with our reduced budget, in the near future we will be charging for these items when clients want them mailed or faxed. Web access is free of charge.

Released this week by BC STATS

- Labour Force Statistics, January 1997

Next week

- Tourism Room Revenue, October 1996
- Earnings and Employment Trends, November 1996

BC STATS, Ministry of Finance & Corporate Relations, 553 Superior Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4
Tel: (250) 387-0327 Fax: (250) 387-0329 Web: http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca E-mail: BCSTATS@fincc04.fin.gov.bc.ca

Infoline Report:

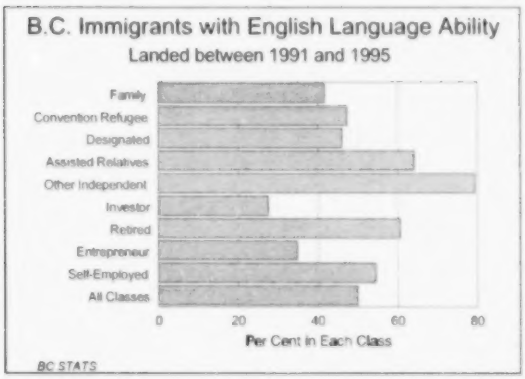
February 7, 1997

English Language Ability of Recent Immigrants

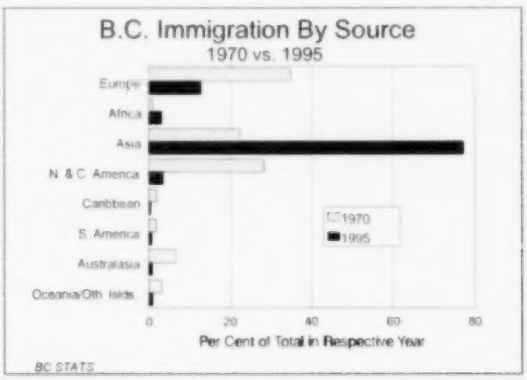
Reprinted from the First Three Quarters, 1996 Issue of *Immigration Highlights*. An annual subscription is $30 + GST.

Over the last two decades, the origin of immigrants to Canada has shifted significantly. In the early 1970's, most immigrants came from either the United States or European countries, whereas a majority of recent immigrants came from Asia. As a result of the higher proportion of immigrants coming from countries where English is not the native language, the overall English language ability of recent immigrants has dropped.

Statistics show that about half of the immigrants who came to British Columbia between 1991 and 1995 possessed no English language ability. During that period, seven of the top ten source countries of B.C. immigrants were Asian countries and they accounted for 87 per cent of all landings to the province. A total of 92,543 persons from these top 10 sources possessed no English language ability. The top three home language spoken by immigrants who did not speak English at time of landing were Cantonese, Mandarin, and Punjabi.



Immigrants in the business classes and Refugee/Designated classes tend to have a relatively lower English language ability then those in the skilled worker classes or Retired Class. This is primarily a result of the different selection criteria in admitting various classes of immigrants. Immigrants in the Other Independent Class and Assisted Relative Class are assessed under a point system in which English language ability is one of the factors for consideration. Although English proficiency is also one of the considerations for assessing immigrants in the business classes, overall English language ability tends to be lower for immigrants in business classes due to the fact that most business immigrants come from non-English speaking countries such as Hong Kong or Taiwan, and that only the principal applicants are assessed. The relatively higher number of non-English speaking family members accompanying the principal applicants tends to further lower the overall English language ability of immigrants landed under the Entrepreneur, Investor and Self-Employed classes.



A high proportion of immigrants who possessed no English language ability at the time of landing were of school age. For those who landed between 1991 and 1995 in the province, approximately 40 per cent (or a total of 78,654 persons) were between age 5 and 24. Due to the increasing number of non-English speaking immigrants entering the education system in the province, the demand on English as a Second Language (ESL) programs in the school system has grown significantly during the last few years.

Over the five school years between 1991/92 and 1995/96, there were approximately 100,000 new students enrolled in ESL programs in the public school system in B.C. In the 1995/96 school year alone, there were 67,842 ESL students in public schools and a majority of them were in the levels from kindergarten to grade eight. In each

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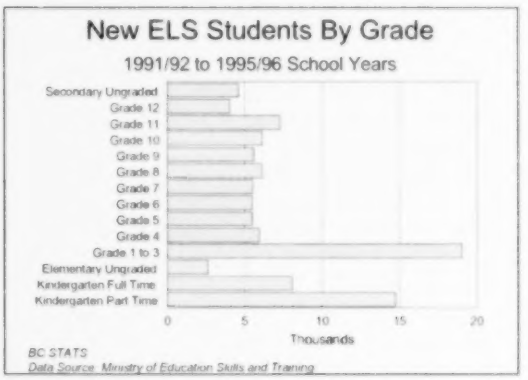
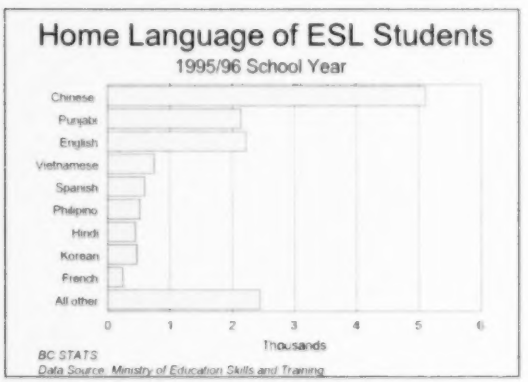
of the five school years between the 1991/92 and 1995/96, more than 70 per cent of the new ESL students were below the grade nine level. In the private/independent school system, there were 1,459 ESL students enrolled in the 1995/96 school year.

Most ESL students are recent immigrants who come from non-English speaking countries. However, some of the ESL students are also Canadian-born children whose home language is not English. They are usually children of recent immigrants who continued to speak a non-English language at home. As a result, these children require ESL assistance as they enter the school system due to insufficient exposure to the English language. The predominate non-English languages spoken by ESL students are Chinese, Punjabi, Vietnamese and Spanish.





In British Columbia, budgeted expenditures for ESL programs in the public school system were $69.5 million during the 1995/96 school year. This is equivalent to approximately $1,100 per full time student per school year in 1995/96. The number of years a student remains in ESL programs varies. For example, of ESL students below grade nine who started ESL in 1991/92 school year, the average number of years a student stayed in the ESL program was 3 years for Spanish speaking students, 3.4 years for Punjabi speaking students, 3.5 years for Chinese speaking students, and 1.9 years for aboriginal students.

With the increasing proportion of immigrants arriving from non-English speaking countries, there will be an on-going challenge of increasing demand on ESL in the provincial education system. While recently announced federal immigration policy indicated that more emphasis will be placed on selecting immigrants with better official language proficiency, it is somewhat difficult to monitor the overall level of English language ability of immigrants coming to settle in any province as accompanying family members and immigrants under certain classes are not subject to assessment for admission. Moreover, ESL demands in B.C. are relatively more difficult to accurately predict based solely on the expected inflow of non-English speaking immigrants to B.C. because demands for ESL are also generated from secondary-migration of immigrants from other provinces. Statistics show that there is a ongoing trend of positive inflow of immigrants coming to settle in B.C. after they originally land elsewhere in Canada.

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highlights

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a weekly digest of recently released British Columbia statistics

Labour Market

- **British Columbia's unemployment rate in January decreased 0.7 percentage points to 8.0% (seasonally adjusted).** The significant decline is a result of 17,800 fewer people (-0.9%) in the labour force, which now stands at 2 million. In addition to the reduced labour force, the number of employed people decreased by 2,300.

  The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for Canada remained unchanged at 9.7 per cent. Of the western provinces, only Saskatchewan (6.3%) and Alberta (6.9%) increased from the previous month. With the exception of Ontario (9.0%) all eastern provinces have rates over the 12 per cent mark.

  Metropolitan area unemployment rates declined for both Vancouver and Victoria from December. The seasonally adjusted rates were 8.2% and 7.7% respectively.

- **Regional unemployment rates for January varied across the province**. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was highest in the Kootenay area at 12.3 per cent followed by Thompson–Okanagan (11.0%). The Cariboo area held the lowest rate in the province at 7.4 per cent. *Source: Statistics Canada*

Business and Economics

- **Sixty-one per cent of BC manufacturers surveyed in January indicated they do not anticipate production to change in the coming quarter**. Only 3% of manufacturers reported a shortage of skilled labour, while some firms experienced working capital shortage 5% an increase from 3% in the previous quarter. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **The value of building permits issued by BC municipalities increased 10.7% between 1995 and 1996.** Total building permits increased to $5.99 billion from $5.42 billion in 1995. The largest increase came from residential permits valued at $4.0 billion, an increase of 17.2% from the previous year.

  The strong performance of the BC housing sector in 1996 was largely a result of historically low interest rates and a stronger demand for new homes. Across Canada, Newfoundland had the largest increase in the value of residential building permits at 43.2%, while Manitoba increased the least at 5.4%.

  Within British Columbia, the areas showing the strongest growth in residential building permits were the Lower Mainland (26.8%), followed by Vancouver Island (21.5%). Within the non–residential building category, in 1996 the North Coast area showed the strongest growth, a 26.2% increase from the previous year.

  Source: Statistics Canada

- **Business incorporations declined in BC to 22,848 in 1996.** This was a 4.2% decrease from the 1995 annual figure. Extra–provincial companies registered in BC showed gains of 4.8% (2,061), in addition, partnerships and proprietorships registered increased by 5.6% to 20,367.

  Source: Ministry of Finance

Culture

- **Attendance at a cultural event declined in 1994-95 but revenues increased.** The number of British Columbians attending a cultural event (theatre, opera, dance or music) declined by 5.2% to 1.8 million in 1994/95. Despite the de

For data originating from Statistics Canada: data sourced to 'Statistics Canada' has been retrieved from CANSIM, the agency's electronic database; otherwise the source is identified as 'SC' plus the publication name or catalogue number.

Did you know...?
In 1994, the regional district of Mount Waddington which spans the northern part of Vancouver Island and the central coast, had the largest average individual taxfiler income at $32,000.

cline in attendance the total revenue increased by 0.2% to $42.6 million. *Source: Statistics Canada*

Health

- **In 1994, British Columbia ranked the highest of all provinces in terms of per capita total health care expenditures**. BC registered estimated spending of $2,631 per person, as compared to Ontario at $2,614 and Manitoba at $2,547. At the other end of the spectrum, Nova Scotia had the lowest expenditures at $2,231. The Canadian average expenditure per person was $2,478.
  Source: Health Canada

- **Provincial expenditures by category show British Columbia to have the highest per capita spending for physician and other health care professionals ($422 and $264).** Compared to the other provinces, Ontario's expenditure is second to BC at $418 and $248. The lowest amount of provincial per capita expenditure by category was Newfoundland at $237 for physicians and $101 for other health care professionals.
  Source: Health Canada

- **Of the ten provinces, British Columbia consistently had the highest accidental poisoning death rate between 1992 and 1994.** The rate increased from 5.0 per 100,000 persons in 1992 to 10.5 per 100,000 in 1993. Increased poisonings in BC partially resulted from the introduction of relatively high potency heroin and the subsequent deaths resulting from drug overdoses .
  Source: Vital Statistics, Ministry of Health

Seniors

- **Seniors accounted for a larger share of the population in Manitoba and Saskatchewan than any other province**. In 1995, both provinces had 14% of their population aged 65 and over. British Columbia, in comparison, had 13% of their population over 65. Only 10% of the population are seniors in Alberta and Newfoundland.

- **The Canadian seniors population will undergo rapid expansion in the next few decades**. In 2016, when the baby boom population begin to turn 65, 16 per cent of the population will be seniors, that represents 4 million people over the age of sixty-five. By 2041, one in four Canadians (10 million) will be seniors.

The Canadian share of the seniors population is relatively small compared to other developed countries. In 1995, twelve per cent of the population in Canada was 65 and over, as compared to 13% in the United States, Japan and the Netherlands; 15% in Germany, France , Switzerland, and Italy; 16% in the U.K.; and 18% in Sweden.
Source: Statistics Canada
A Portrait of Seniors in Canada

Income

- **If a four–person family living in Vancouver earned less than $31,862, they would be deemed to have "low income"**. The same four person family living in a rural setting would be considered low income if they earned less than $21,690. *Source: Statistics Canada*
  Low Income Cut-Offs

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